



Modoc County

Modoc County, with a population of 8,511 as of 2022 (RCRC), encompasses the extreme northeast between Shasta Cascade Range and the Great Basin region of California. The county is comprised of 4,203 square miles of unspoiled, unpolluted, and un-crowded high desert splendor. With elevations ranging from 4,000 to 10,000 feet, 90 percent of the county is comprised of national forests, refuges and wilderness areas. Modoc County is bordered on the north by the state of Oregon, on the east by the state of Nevada, on the south by Lassen and Shasta Counties and on the west by Siskiyou County. Originally a part of Siskiyou County, Modoc County, with its rich Indian lore, scenic beauty and abundant resources, became its own entity in 1874.

Modoc County was named by the Modoc Indians meaning “The Smiles of God” because of their intense love for the land which is comprised of rugged lava plateaus, fertile valleys and majestic mountains. Comprised of 70 percent public owned forest and wilderness, Modoc County’s high desert climate provides warm dry summers, perfect for the outdoor enthusiast to enjoy camping, fishing, cross-country skiing and other outdoor activities. With more than 250 miles of trout streams and over 4,000 acres of lakes and reservoirs, Modoc County is a dream come true for hunters and fishermen.

Alturas, with a population of 2,692 in 2022, is the largest city in Modoc County. At an elevation of 4,446 ft., this city serves as the seat of Modoc County. Alturas (Spanish for “Valley on Top of a Mountain”) is located in the broad valley of the Pit River in the center of the county at the junction of Highways 395 and 299. Formed by the erosion and rebuilding of the volcanic flows of the Modoc Plateau, the valley is set on a prehistoric lakebed. The city is bordered on the south by the Modoc National Wildlife Refuge, the location of the natural preservation of wetlands. Marshes, forests, plains and lakes found in this area provide habitat for many types of wildlife.

East of Alturas, one the most beautiful mountain ranges, the Warner Mountains, can be found. The Warner Mountains, often referred to as “Where the West Still Lives,” encompasses a major portion of Modoc National Forest. At over 70,000 acres, this area offers an abundance of wildlife and excellent recreational opportunities. Other areas of the county includes Surprise Valley, Jess Valley and Fandango Pass, all of which are considered to be the best ranching valleys in Northern California.

Picturesque and unspoiled Big Valley, tucked between high mountain peaks, consists of the towns of Adin, Lookout, Bieber, and Nubieber. All of these towns border the 14,100 acres of the Ash Creek Wildlife area. It is said that, during the winter months, nearly one-half of the world's population of Cackling Geese migrate here.

Settlers arriving in this area in the early 1800's began logging and farming in this region. Until recently, agriculture and logging had been the main source of employment for residents of Modoc County. However, due to the restrictions on logging and water rights, numerous town businesses, including several mills, were forced to close their doors.

Currently, the major employers in the area are government, agriculture, services, wholesale/retail and manufacturing. In Surprise Valley, cattle ranching and alfalfa hay production are still the leading enterprises in the area.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- As of the year 2022, total population was 8,511 (RCRC), of which 30.4% (census.gov) were aged 60+ and 13% were aged 75+ (RCRC)
- Roughly 2.4 people per square mile (RCRC).

TAREGETED POPULATIONS

- 75+ 13% (RCRC)
- Poverty 19.9% (Census)

AGRICULTURE – Top Crops

- Hay, Alfalfa
- Cattle and Calves
- Potatoes, Irish

LABOR FORCE

- Total population unemployment rate in 2022 was 8.5% (RCRC), compared to 5.4% statewide (RCRC)
- The labor force in 2022 was 4,093 members (RCRC).

INCOME

- In 2022, the county's median household income was \$54,962 (census.gov)
- The per capita income in 2022 was \$28,860 (census.gov)
- Poverty rate in 2022 was 19.9% in the county (census.gov).

HOUSING

- Total housing units in 2022 were 4,767 (census.gov). This is an average of 2.31 (census.gov) individuals per housing unit.

CLIMATE

- Average Maximum Temperature – mid-80's
- Average Low Temperature – low 40's
- Average annual precipitation– ranges from 12" to 18"
- Average annual snowfall – ranges from 20" to 55"

References

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/modoccountycalifornia/PST045222>

https://www.rcrcnet.org/sites/default/files/useruploads/Documents/Advocacy/Economic_Development/County_Profiles/2018%20Modoc%20Economic%20&%20Demographic%20Profile.pdf